Live Animal Handling For Butchering Meeting Kit



Safe handling of animals for butchering (processing) starts with the facility layout. It begins with the management of the animals as they move through the process, and ends with a properly trained worker in butchering techniques.

DANGERS/HAZARDS/RISKS

Handlers must be made aware that the potential risks each task poses are many. If handlers are too comfortable and do not consider the possible risks of the jobs they are carrying out, they may find themselves trampled, crushed, pinned, stepped on, bit, rammed or thrown off. The dangers happen quickly, as animals can injure their handlers both deliberately and accidentally. These accidents are more than likely due to a worker who failed to follow safe animal-handling practices.

IMPORTANT FACTORS TO INCORPORATE IN ANIMAL HANDLING ROUTINES

1. Heed the Warnings Signs of Animals

- Raised or pinned ears
- Raised tail
- Raised back hair
- Bared teeth
- Pawing the ground and/or snorting

2. Handling Methods

- Move calmly, slowly, and deliberately, and announce your approach with a soft touch to their front end where you are in full view.
- Avoid loud noises.
- Give new animals time and space to adjust to the surroundings.
- Never prod an animal if it has no place to go.
- Be wary of male animals, as they tend to be more aggressive.
- Do not work in close quarters with no escape route when you are working with animals who are sick or injured, or there are outside elements, like a

storm, that may spook them.
- When working with new animals or if strangers must be in the space, exercise extreme caution.

3. Handling Animals During Transport and Lairage

- An electric goad should be used rather than a stick or tail-twisting not only to avoid stress but also to prevent carcass bruising.
- To avoid fighting, animals not reared together must not be mixed during transport and lairage. Load and unload using shallow stepped ramps to avoid stumbles. Trucks should be neither over- nor underloaded. Overloading causes stress and bruising due to crushing. Underloading results in animals being thrown around and falling more than necessary. Drivers should not corner at excessive speed and must accelerate and decelerate gently.
- Fasting before slaughter reduces the volume of gut contents and hence bacteria and therefore reduces the risk of contamination of the carcass during dressing. It is usually sufficient for the animals to receive their last feed on the day before slaughter. Stock should have a rest period after arrival at the slaughterhouse. However, long periods in the lairage can lead to DFD if the animals are restless and fighting or mounting.
- Animals should be as clean as possible at slaughter. Producers should wash their animals before leaving the farm. Trucks used for transport must be washed after each load and the lairage at the slaughterhouse should be kept clear of faecal matter and frequently washed.
- The weather, especially expected temperatures the few days following slaughter, is extremely important. Night temperatures should be 32 degrees Fahrenheit or lower for the carcass to chill properly without refrigeration.

FINAL WORD

Handling animals must be done with respect for the appropriate methods and the animals themselves. Understanding how to read the warning signs of animals in a state of fear or aggression, keeping the spaces where animals are held and directed through in good working order, and wearing the proper protective gear are all ways to maintain a safe working environment with very unpredictable animals.